

REMARKS

Claims 2-6, 8-10, and 12-45 are pending in the present application. Applicants thank the Examiner for the careful consideration and favorable treatment of some of the claims, namely claims 3-6, 8-10, 12, 13, 15-18, 20-28 30, 32-36 and 39-45 which were allowed and claims 14, 29 31, 37 and 38 which were objected to and indicated as being allowable if rewritten.

Claims 2 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Freeman Optics & Vision Limited (WO 94/06047). Applicants have made a minor amendment to claim 2 to more positively set forth that the present claim is directed to a microlithographic reduction projection. In rejecting claim 2, the Examiner's argument is based on the holding that "microlithographic reduction projection" is only an intended use as opposed to a structural limitation. In order to more clearly set forth that this claim feature is not merely an intended use but rather is a structural limitation. Accordingly, claim 2 has been amended to recite an optical system that comprises a microlithographic reduction projection catadioptric objective, and thus, this claim element is clearly positively set forth and does add a structural limitation.

In view of the foregoing, there is a clear technical structural difference between the optical system of claim 2 and the one disclosed in the cited reference. More specifically, Freeman discloses optical systems, such as binoculars, that each contains eyepieces (claim 1) for use with the human eye. Thus, the disclosed optical systems produce a real image on the retina. The embodiments disclosed in the Freeman reference therefore have and are characterized as having magnifications (see p. 4, lines 10-13 and lines 28-29). In direct contrast to the teachings of Freeman, the claimed optical system comprises a microlithographic reduction projection catadioptric objective and this leads to a clear structural difference between the claimed optical system and those embodiments disclosed in the Freeman reference. More specifically, the geometric properties of the claimed apparatus differ substantially from those of the Freeman reference since the Freeman reference discloses systems that have magnification as opposed to the claimed reduction property of the present optical system. In sum, the reduction property of the claimed system is lacking in the Freeman reference.

Also, a microlithographic reduction projectin catadioptric objective is known to those skilled in the art to image a first object, namely a reticle, to a second object, namely to a wafer, at a definite distance, typically on the order of magnitude of 1 m. In contrast, the object-image distance of binoculars typically is greater by one or more orders of magnitude.

Applicants respectfully submit the present amendment should be entered since it does not require additional searching and/or consideration by the Examiner. The present amendment to claim 2 merely more positively recites an element that the Examiner has previously been exposed to and has already considered. Since, the present amendment places the application in condition for allowance and does not require further consideration and/or searching by the Examiner, the present amendment should be entered.

While the Examiner has objected to claim 31, Applicants believe this is in error since claim 31 depends from claim 6 which stands allowed as opposed to depending from rejected claim 2. Withdrawal of this objection is in order.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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